

# Dragon Newsletter

*August, 2006 Edition*



Dear Dragon Families and Friends,

Greetings from the hot sands of Camp Taji... August is almost gone and we're yet another month closer to home. Although the long days of summer show no let up in the temperatures here (138 degrees Fahrenheit today), we continue our daily missions as the calendar draws steadily closer to rejoining our families and friends.

Promotion is always a high point in any Soldier's career and again the Dragons are blessed. Several of our junior Soldiers enjoyed a step up in rank: to Private E2 we promoted PV2 Sabala, PV2 Moran, and PV2 Strickland; to Private First Class we welcome PFC Gillis and PFC Smith; and to Specialist, SPC Cho. Great work and congratulations to these Soldiers as they continue to exceed the standard. Our Noncommissioned Officer ranks also gained another outstanding new leader, SGT Scholl, a member of our maintenance crew in Delta Company. Additionally, our officer ranks saw the promotion to CW4 of Lowell Jones, one of our pilots in Bravo Company. As always, we congratulate all of our Soldiers on their professionalism and standard of excellence. Just as importantly, we thank our families for their support...you are all great Americans.

Charlie Company saw the most significant change over the last thirty days as it has undergone a change of command. We welcome CPT

Rod Pauletto as the new Sidewinder 6 and farewell CPT Mark Greene, who moved on to work in the 4ID Headquarters. He went to serve as the Brigade Aviation Officer for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Armor Division and their Striker teams. CPT Pauletto comes to us from Division G3 Air, and as you might expect, hit the ground running. He is already up and flying daily

missions as an Air Mission Commander. It's amazing how quickly the train moves, but everyone is doing a great job keeping up.

In other news, Command Sergeant Major Morant has started a "Ping-pong Challenge Night." Every Friday, any Soldier wishing to compete is entitled to show up, step up, and attempt to defeat the CSM. Good luck to all who take the challenge and dare to excel...we can't wait to see who the winner will be...competition

and pride, two great assets, go a long way toward building esprit de corps and the feeling of camaraderie among our troops here. We're proud of them all!

**[You didn't hear this from me, but CW2 Barnard already "paddled" the CSM...updates next month.]**

As we close out this month, the R & R program also comes to an end, reminding us how we'll all be coming home soon. With thoughts of our families in our minds, we continue to do what our great Nation asks of us, with determination and pride.

Thank you all for your tireless support.

MICHAEL J. RAPAVI  
DRAGON 6



The flag of 1st Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment "Attack"  
Long may it wave...



# Alpha Company "Vipers"

Well, it's that time of the month again....hello to all out there in the world from Camp Taji, Iraq! Another month down and it seems that time is really starting to fly for us. That could be because all of us here have remained quite busy. The operational tempo never seems to slow, which is fine because then you do not have much time to think about anything else (like home!) We are all still looking for that first cloud. Now it's been four months since any of us have seen one. Yeah, the temperature is still "ridiculously hot". Fortunately at night the temperature drops down to only "unbelievably hot." Hopefully September will bring some relief from the heat.

As for the company, everyone has been working hard and staying focused on the mission at hand. Every day seems the same as the last, with days of the week totally losing meaning. If you were to ask one of the Vipers what day of the week it was, they would most likely not have any clue at all. We all miss actually having a weekend to work towards. But that will come soon enough, with

redeployment on the horizon. Planning for coming home is in full swing and has put a little spring in everyone's step. The Viper Lounge has been rather vacant this past month. This was due to the fact that most all of the pilots have been flying at night and

it is way too hot to hang out and smoke cigars and catch up once they get done working in the morning. The company has also been short handed with many of its members going on a well-deserved leave this month. CW2 Larry Paul will be the last member of the company to take leave when he departs on August 20<sup>th</sup>. While it is sad that there is no more leave, it also means that coming home is just around the corner!



**Saying "Farewell" to one of our own as he moves over to Headquarters Company to be a part of the S3 team.**

with that special "Viper Touch." His farewell speech was short and emotional as everyone said their goodbyes. The good news is that CPT Dunn will still be able to stay in his current room and fly with the company, so he won't be that far away. With that farewell came the hail of CPT Dunn's replacement, 1LT Wes Hunt. Wes is from Houston, Texas and come from long family military tradition. His father is a retired Lieutenant Colonel and his sister is a Major, both in the Army. Wes began flying with the company last week and it looks like he will have no problem filling the large shoes left behind by CPT Dunn.

Well that's what is going on over on this side of the world. We miss you all very much and are continuing to count the days until we are back home with all of you. Until next time.....

CPT Tim Measner  
Viper 06

The Vipers had a yet another bitter-sweet farewell this past month. CPT Jesse Dunn received the call to head up to the S3 shop to become a battle captain. It was a major loss to the company with no one wanting to see him go. The company had a farewell for him and presented CPT Dunn with an Iraq flag, modified



**Saying "Farewell" to one of our own as he moves over to Headquarters Company to be a part of S3 team.**

# Bravo Company "Reapers"



## REAPERS

The month of August has started off fast and furious for the Reapers, and it has proven to be one of the most successful months for Bravo Company operations. In the last two weeks, Bravo Company has had five direct fire engagements against the enemy, providing timely support to Coalition Forces throughout Baghdad.

As some of you may have read, CW2 Isaac Sauer, CW2 Greg Vaughn, CW2 Joel Coleman, and 1LT John Marion conducted a daring direct fire engagement in South Baghdad, neutralizing enemy forces who fired at one of the Brigade's MEDEVAC helicopters. The Reapers' heroics were well documented and appeared on the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and the Army News websites. Just a couple days prior, CW3 Kyle Perrier prevented an enemy insurgent from engaging an Iraqi Army squad at close range, potentially saving their lives. Along with 1LT Kyle Shouse, CW2 Roger Stidom, and CW2 Woody Welch, Kyle took part in another hasty operation to defeat a large scale attack on our 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Combat Team, 4ID friends in the Karbala Province. Almost every pilot in the company has been part of a significant action this month that defeated an enemy attack

or prevented enemy forces from conducting a subsequent attack.

This success could not be possible without the effort of our crew chiefs everyday. Our air maintenance team is running on full cylinders and continues to get stronger. Great credit is due to our shift leaders, currently SGT Alquin Suarez, SGT Brandon York, and SGT Gary Witte. SGT Keister, SGT Kennedy, and SGT Trammell have also been outstanding shift leader, leaning forward and never putting off work that could be completed immediately. I could not be more pleased with the dedication ALL our crew chiefs have shown over the course of this deployment. It takes a special kind of person to get up each day over a nine month time period, knowing that they are going to face 120-130 degree heat, and come to work with the same commitment and professionalism. That kind of excellence takes more than just patriotism, it take a high level of personal pride and commitment to "the team."

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, the Reapers hosted a get together to promote "our old man," (now) CW4 Lowell Jones. As I said at his promotion, it is not often that a Company Commander has an aviator with Lowell's experience at the company level. Lowell and I fly together almost everyday and I count on his advice during challenging situations. Based off the huge turn out for his promotion, it was obvious that I was only one of the many people who values Lowell's experience and mentorship. Congratulations to Lowell for reaching the CW4 milestone and joining the field grade ranks.

The last major event in August was SPC Chad Henning superior performance during his promotion board.



LTC Rapavi, CW4 Jones, & CW4 Farrow share pizza and a laugh at CW4 Jones' promotion.

Despite coming right off R&R Leave, SPC Henning smoked a board comprised of the battalion's senior Non-Commissioned Officers. Chad scored 147 points out of a possible 150, putting him on course for future promotion. I look forward to pinning NCO rank on SPC Henning in the near future.

The Reaper Family Readiness Group continues to provide us with awesome support. Nine months into the deployment and the mail keeps flowing. For those who may not have heard, our mail will shut off as we get close to redeployment. Please do not try to send mail after October 1st, or it may not be received. Thanks for all the support and I look forward to thanking you each in person in the coming months.

For those of you who made not have seen the "Press Clipping" from recent Reaper successes, visit the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division home page or contact our FRG leader, Gerrine Lizama, at [ger-rine.lizama@us.army.mil](mailto:ger-rine.lizama@us.army.mil) to get on her distribution roster.

Reapers!

CPT Andy Caine  
Reaper 06



CW2 "Jaguar" Marceaux digging into the "free" pizza



# Charlie Company "Sidewinders"



As the Sidewinders continue on through August, there have been a few changes among the company. First, CPT Greene has departed to work on the 4ID Division Staff and I have assumed command of the Sidewinders. We wish CPT Greene well and remind him that he will always be a Sidewinder. My name is CPT Rodric Pauletto and I come to you from the G3 Aviation and Airspace section of the 4ID Division Staff. Our Change of Command was on 5 August and I am honored to be among those who can call themselves Charlie Company Sidewinders. We also welcomed SPC Jacob Platt into our ranks since our last newsletter. We are excited to have him in the company and look forward to serving with him side by side.

August has been a hot month with temperatures reaching into the 120s. We are looking forward to cooling



Outgoing CPT Greene on the left and incoming CPT Pauletto on the right with LTC Rapavi in the middle for the "Sidewinder" Change of Command Ceremony.



1SG Hampton prepares the troops with SPC Jernigan as the Guidon Bearer for the ceremony.

off, but the weather man says not until October. Until then, we continue to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week flying and maintaining aircraft. Charlie Company continues to fly safely over the skies of Baghdad providing unrelenting support to the troops on the ground. We continue to think of all of you at home and are anxious to return. At home, the larger Sidewinders family has gained a new member. Mike and Dione McGhee gave birth to Presley Morgan McGhee on 27 July 06. She was 8 lbs, 12 oz and 21 inches long. Congratulations to the McGhees on their new edition.

With my best regards,

CPT Rodric G. Pauletto  
Sidewinder 06

# Delta Company "Dawgs"



Dearest Friends and Family Members,

One month closer and we are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We now have less than ninety days and although we are getting closer, it seems like this is the most difficult part of the deployment. Your support keeps us going through these months, where the mission is busier than ever and the heat is consistently over 115 degrees. Thanks for all that you do.

1SG Belle and I will keep your Soldiers informed on their approximate re-deployment date and how re-integration will be accomplished. There are many details that are still being worked out and information that is not yet available to distribute. My best recommendation at this point is to remain supportive like you always do, but try to stay away from rumors. Rumors at this point only add to frustration and confusion. Stay connected with the FRG or get involved if you have not to this point. (You can contact my wife, Jo at [joreed.james@us.army.mil](mailto:joreed.james@us.army.mil)) Use that as a conduit

for the most reliable information and the whole process will seem much more bearable in the end. Also, don't send packages after October 1<sup>st</sup>, as your Soldier may not receive them due to the impending transfer of forces.

We want to take a moment to congratulate many of our Soldiers that were promoted this month. Congratulations go to the newly promoted SGT Scholl, CPL Evans, CPL Akers, PFC Gillis, PFC Haskins and PFC Smith. We thank all of you for your excellent

performance in the maintenance platoon and as you know, with rank comes responsibility! Great job. We also would like to thank SPC Tromp for his re-enlistment in our Army this month. A great Soldier who contributes immensely to this company, SPC Tromp will continue to be an asset to the Army.

We are doing well. To be candid, we are doing much better than I thought we would in the ninth month of this grueling pace. Your Soldiers are truly great Americans and dedicated professionals. I know you are ready to have them back safe and be able to spend some well deserved time on leave. The first sergeant and I make it our daily mission to ensure that we return with all of our loved ones and leave Iraq better than we found it. We thank you for what you do and ask that you remain focused with us as we complete our important mission here at Taji.

All the best,

CPT Corey M. James  
DAWG 06



"Just hanging out"



SFC Lyter at the end of a tough day in the hangar...looking good.



# Echo Company "Rough Riders"



Dear Roughrider Families and Friends from Roughrider 6,

Well, it is official that I will be changing command before our return to the states. I would like to take this time to say thanks to all the Soldiers, their families, and my friends for their support during this outstanding opportunity to command a fine company. You will all be sorely missed but I will not be going far, for I will be taking over the Battalion S4 job from CPT Salvo as he goes to be the new HHC 1-4 commander. Despite the high temperature, morale is extremely high, especially now that the countdown has begun for redeployment. On the sports side of things, the "ROUGHRIDERS" team is doing well in the current league tournament and showed a dominate performance with a 29 to 5 win over rival HHC 1-4.

Despite the sweltering heat all platoons continue to do outstanding things. Distribution platoon just passed the 2 million mark for gallons of fuel issued and has now drawn and issued over \$25 million in ammunition. Maintenance has been extremely busy with loads of equipment services and a lot of add on armor installation making for very long days in the hot sun. Chief Horton and the welders in maintenance also finished the gate for the Motorpool and will be adding some cosmetic touches to it shortly to leave their mark in Iraq. Echo Company is truly showing why we are the finest Forward Support Company in the United States Army. I am very proud to be your commander.



PV2 Benasa and PV2 Monroe receive a briefing from LTC Rapavi upon arrival to Camp Taji.

## “Rough Riders” (cont’d)



Congratulations on promotions for SPC Cho, PFC Strickland, and PV2 Sabala; well deserved. We would also like to welcome two new additions to the “Roughriders” PV2 Benasa, mechanic, and PV2 Monroe, truck driver, they’ve both just joined us over here, ready to work and have blended in with our flow of daily duties. The following soldiers will be going to the Soldier of the Month Board later this month: SPC Green-peoples and SPC Espinosa. Good luck to you all. Well, for the last time have a blessed “Roughrider” day.

CPT Ritch  
Roughrider 6



SPC Hannaman, SPC Castaneda, and SPC Ricciardo hang out at the cannon right outside the mail room.



SPC Castaneda, SPC Ambelas, SPC Hernandez, and SPC Statz goof around waiting for the next class.



Take a look at some of our “Rough Riders” hanging out and always learning something.

COMBAT LIFESAVER COURSE in Action!!!

SPC Wildes makes a great test subject during Combat lifesaver class.



# HHC "Stallions"



## Stallion Family and Friends,

Hello once again from the desert. The past month has been as busy as any other during this deployment. The one good thing about staying busy is the time just keeps on moving. Before you know it, your loved ones will return home sharing the many stories from their Iraqi experience. You will probably be able to believe half of what you hear.

Last month I wrote of the first Stallion to win the NCO of The Month and Quarter Boards. This month, I am proud to tell you about the second Stallion to win NCO of the Month. SGT Jose Saldana who hails from Kosse, Texas won The NCO of The Month Board on 20 July. SGT Saldana is the middle child of five brothers and two sisters. SGT Saldana joined the company in October of 2004 after redeploying from OIF I with another unit in the brigade. He has spent the past eight years in the U.S. Army as a combat medic. He will serve this country in exemplary fashion for at least another twelve years. SGT Saldana currently works in the Troop Medical Clinic as a shift leader and combat lifesaver instructor. He and his wife PFC Saldana are expecting a new addition to their family around 25 December. Whether the addi-

tion arrives before or after Christmas, it will surely be a joyous occasion when the couple is reunited.

I mentioned SPC Lyons Cabacungan briefly last month for his much deserved promotion. It is my pleasure to tell you all about his latest accomplishment. SPC Cabacungan joined a long list of Stallion Soldiers when he won the 1-4 ARB August Soldier of the Month Board. He is the third of four brothers from Maui, Hawaii. SPC Cabacungan has completed four years of military service and plans to reach 20 years. Upon redeployment, he plans on attending college for teaching and agriculture. Caba, as he is known to his fellow Stallions truly enjoys the unit's camaraderie and the energy that the U.S. Army brings daily. Congratulations Caba!

SFC Brenda J. Potts is originally from Old Joe, Arkansas. I met SFC Potts during OIF I, while we were both assigned to 1-4 ARB living on FOB Speicher in Tikrit. She is a 17 year veteran and the backbone of the battalion S1 section. SFC Potts has done an outstanding job with the personnel section despite having worked for 5 different S1 officers in the past three years. She has been the continuity for her section during these deployments and the reset period. She has been married to Alan Potts for 19 years and they have two sons. Jay the youngest son is former Navy and resides in Texas. SGT Ryan Potts is a Non-Commissioned Officer that arrived here on FOB Taji about two weeks ago. He is also SFC Potts' oldest son and a member of the 172<sup>nd</sup> Stryker BCT. Anyone that witnessed the reunion between SFC



SGT Potts relaxing atop his vehicle as part of the 172d SBCT here on Camp Taji

Potts and her son in the dining facility could see the pure joy on SFC Potts' face. She may be in Iraq, but she appeared to be on cloud nine. For some strange reason she seems to have a permanent smile on her face these days.

I would like to welcome CPT Jesse Dunn to the unit. He is not necessarily new to the unit as he returns to HHC by way of Alpha Company. He is originally from Lititz, Pennsylvania and a 2003 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. CPT Dunn recently completed eighteen months as an Attack Platoon Leader. He is now one of the Battle Captains working in the battalion TOC. CPT Dunn will become a pilot-in-command in the near future and plans to spend as little time in the TOC as possible. Welcome back CPT Dunn, once a Stallion always a Stallion.

1LT Tanya Mack is from Bloomington, Indiana. She comes to us from 1<sup>st</sup> BCT and is a welcome addition to an already dynamic Intelligence Section. She has already served as a platoon leader and primary Intelligence Officer in another unit. 1LT Mack's military career began as a legal specialist in the National Guard for four years. She has currently been on active duty for three years. Welcome to the Stallion family 1LT Mack.



SGT Saldana congratulated by 1SG Hampton for his outstanding performance as NCO of the Month





## "Stallions" (cont'd)



MAJ Needum asks "Where am I going from here?"

I urge you all to remain focused yet flexible on the things that truly matter. We may all look for professional success, financial stability and a family happiness. In this profession it is so very easy to develop a fixation for one aspect over the others. Yes, it is a constant struggle to maintain balance in life. I know that you will all be fine. Once again, thank you all for your support.

### Stallion Birthdays

SGT Welch  
SPC Butler  
CSM Morant  
SGT Hodges  
SPC Baham  
SGT Mundo  
CPT Alioto

The days of this commander are numbered. I was promoted to the rank of Major effective 1 August 06. With the new rank will come new responsibility and eventually a new position. At the moment, the plan is for me to remain in the battalion for the remainder of the deployment. I enlisted as a private back in 1992 with the intentions of staying in the military for two years. The initial desire was to earn the money for my college education. One of two things happened in the first two years. Either I found something or something found me within those first two years and I was hooked. The single greatest joy that I have experienced in the military is that ability to lead Soldiers. I would like you all to know that it has been my extreme pleasure to work with such fine young Americans as these Stallions truly are the best. I will be in the brigade for a few more months and will report to school in January to further the military education process. Thank you all for the wonderful support that we have received.

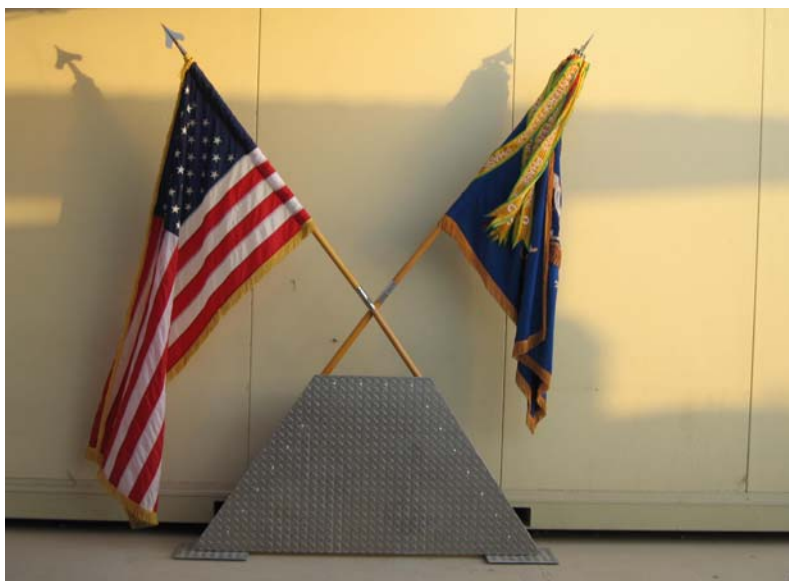
Your new HHC Commander will be CPT Matthew Salvo. CPT Salvo is not new to the unit; he has been serving as the Battalion S4 for this entire deployment. CPT Salvo has a lovely family that includes wife, Shannon and daughter Kennah. CPT Salvo will do a great job for these Stallions.

Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner, torn, but flying, streams like the thunderstorm against the wind.

**Lord Byron**

**STALLIONS ATTACK!!**

**MAJ Byron C. Needum**  
**Stallion 06**  
**OUT**



Happy Birthday to all our "Stallions" and many more to come.

# Dragon Photo Corner



1SG Belle and 1SG Hampton  
Sharing a joke???



Look at the Great Camp Taji Sunset



Armament



SPC Jernigan says "Look Top, it's clean once again"



Daily duties as crew chief



PFC Tieuel is congratulated by 1SG Hampton on winning  
Soldier of the Month



# Dragon Photo Corner



On Camp Taji, there's a sunrise for every sunset



PFC Haskins and SPC Truffa taking a break from the latest round of aircraft maintenance in the hangar.



Part of the Scenic Route-just look at the view



SPC Tromp and CPT James after his re-enlistment in our Army



SGT Christy looks like he just woke up from his afternoon



SGT Scholl, CPL Evans, CPL Akers, PFC Gillis, PFC Haskins and PFC Smith being promoted in the hangar

# Dragon Photo Corner



CPT Measner says Farewell to CPT Dunn as he moves to HHC



Alpha Vipers are sad to see him move to Headquarters



CW4 Jones gets pinned at his promotion ceremony by LTC Rapavi and CPT Caine



Top finds beer in Qatar...mmm...beeeeer!



Introducing Presley Morgan McGhee—A new addition to the “Dragon” families



# Dragon Photo Corner



How's this for hanging out???



1SG Hampton helping both Commanders make the move



CW2 Pressley in the cockpit



WHO??? Looks like he's having fun, too



LTC Rapavi speaking on behalf of MAJ Needum's promotion as everyone listens



SGT Dorman say another Apache ready to fly

# Dragon Photo Corner



CPT Needum says goodbye to rank of Captain .....



.....and hello to rank of Major at his pinning ceremony with LTC Rapavi



SGT Beard on airfield



Mosque of the Believers  
4th Brigade Combat Team



"Shopping" is the word here—AAFES is with us



Sidewinder Passing of the Guidon  
a military tradition



# Dragon Photo Corner



Camp Taji Landscape



1SG Hampton congratulates PFC Tieuel's performance in winning Soldier of the Month



Living on Camp Taji



Working on Camp Taji



Just like home—Roadside billboards here on Camp Taji



COL MacWillie and CSM patton join CSM Morant for the Sidewinder Change of Command ceremony



# Dragon Photo Corner



Team shot of Headquarters  
The Swingers



SPC Ceja hits one for the team



SGT Audet throwing another one across the plate



SGT Lizama takes a longshot



SPC Sneed and the one that got away



Good-night



# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

## Enduring the Final Lap

One of the greatest attributes of the Army is the mental and physical discipline associated with Physical Fitness Training (PT). Even in Iraq, PT is still important. One of the primary reasons PT continues to be important besides the obvious health benefits, is because it gauges and develops the soldier's mental and physical endurance. Endurance is key to success.

In fact, endurance remains an essential element to nearly everything we set to accomplish in life. The sports we play, our pursuit of education, patience with our children, even the endurance of our helicopters as we fly our missions. In aviation, endurance generally refers to the maximum amount of time an aircraft may remain in flight given an amount of fuel. In like manner, our bodies, minds, and souls much like the complexity of a helicopter, must maintain enough fuel or power until the flight is finished, until the mission is complete. Naturally, for each of us, our fuel is our hope of being reunited with our families, our commitment to the success of our mission, and our assurance in God's faithfulness. In these, we must not falter, we must not fail, and we must not faint. Instead, as any tested veteran understands, the final stretch is the most important. This is the most important moment in our journey because endurance is revealed during the final stretch. The welfare of our family, the affection in our marriage, and the financial soundness of our futures depend on our capacity to endure this final stretch. If there was ever a time for our families, marriages, and our mission to be strong, this is it!

In similar fashion, the Apostle Paul writes, "I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me..." (Phil 3:13) Though we are close, God's word encourages to press towards the moment of absolute success. The challenges of the previous months have left us, and the joys ahead await us, but our focus is to diligently progress towards the prize for which every soldier, every spouse, every parent, every child has pressed thus far. We have sacrificed much, we may be tired, perhaps lonely and concerned, but these are the times to gather strength and run "like heavens" in everything you do. Whatever strength you

have, use it to bless a soldier, love a spouse, hug a child, appreciate a parent, write to a son, listen to a daughter for the race is near its end and we too shall celebrate the victory of our endurance together.

Blessings,

Chaplain R. Hernandez

New arrivals  
PFC Monroe & PV2 Benasa  
are welcomed to Camp Taji  
by folks that care

